

FIFTY YEARS AGO IN WORLD WAR II

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1944

By the winter of 1944, the Axis Powers' dream of victory had been replaced by the harsh realities of battles lost, fleets sunk, and cities bombed. In the Pacific, liberating forces were closing in on the Philippines, U.S. submarines prowled the waters off the home islands of Japan, and in China Japanese Army units were crumbling under the relentless pressure of Chiang Kai-shek's forces. In Russia, the grip of yet another winter was tightening on German armies once thought invincible; they were now forced to fight with dwindling resources, dependent upon supply lines threatened by the most massive partisan effort in history, and against the ever-growing strength of the Soviet ground and air forces. In Europe, American and Allied military strength had swelled in the five months since D-Day and had gained momentum in spite of bitter German resistance. The end was in sight, and in six more months the European war would be over.

These and other highlights of World War II are excerpted from Bud Hannings' *A Portrait of the Stars and Stripes, Volume II*, available for only \$50.00 from Seniram Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 432, Glenside, PA 19038.

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| 2 November | <i>The 323d Infantry Regiment, 81st Infantry Division, attacks to dislodge a determined Japanese force on Peleliu, Palau Islands.</i> |
| 4 November | <i>The Second Ukrainian Front seizes objectives en route to Budapest, in the face of fierce German and Hungarian resistance.</i> |
| 12 November | <i>British Lancaster bombers sink the German battleship Tirpitz in Norway's Tromso Fjord.</i> |
| 14 November | <i>Elements of the U.S. 90th Infantry and 10th Armored Divisions force crossings of the Moselle River in France.</i> |
| 16 November | <i>When his squad of the 95th Infantry Division is caught in a crossfire, Staff Sergeant Andrew Miller singlehandedly assaults and overwhelms a machinegun crew at bayonet point, then knocks out a second gun, killing two enemy, wounding three, and capturing two. He wipes out another machinegun by himself on the following day and displays similar astonishing heroism on at least two other occasions, until he is killed in action in Germany. He is posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.</i> |
| 25 November | <i>In the British Eighth Army area of Italy, elements of the Polish 2d Corps cross the Marzano river, while the British 4th Division advances to the Lamone River, permitting the Indian 10th Division to drive north against stiff German resistance.</i> |
| 8 December | <i>Private Elmer E. Fryar, U.S. 511th Parachute Infantry, singlehandedly holds off an entire Japanese platoon, killing at least 27 and preventing his company from being outflanked. He later jumps in front of his platoon leader, taking a sniper's bullet; mortally wounded, he throws a grenade, killing the sniper. Private Fryar's valor and self-sacrifice are recognized by the posthumous award of the Medal of Honor.</i> |
| 16-26 December | <i>The Germans' planned stroke to demoralize U.S. forces with a decisive defeat materializes in the Battle of the Bulge. Although directed against U.S. 99th Division units still recovering from the carnage of the Huertgen Forest, the German penetration is slowed, brought to a halt, and eventually reduced by units rapidly shifted to meet this new threat. A key event of the Bulge is the relief of the embattled 101st Airborne Division that sustained losses of 1,541 officers and men in the defense of Bastogne.</i> |